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## THE INDIAN MESSIAH.

THE suggestion made in the last number, that writing the history of the "Messiah Craze" would prove a difficult task, has received early and unexpected confirmation. An article in the "*American Anthropologist*," April, 1891, by First Lieutenant Nathaniel P. Phister, U. S. A., sets forth a theory altogether new. According to this account, the doctrine was first preached in 1869 by a Piute Indian, who lived in Mason's Valley, about sixty miles south of Virginia City, Nevada. This prophet died after preaching for two or three years. After his death, interest in the matter ceased until September, 1887, when a new prophet, Kvit-tsów by name, took up the matter. There is no doubt, says Lieutenant Phister, that the revival instituted by him has resulted in the present Indian disturbance, so far, at least, as religion or superstition is connected with the latter. According to the doctrine of this preacher, who still lives and teaches, the downfall of the Indians is ascribed to their religious indifference, and their restoration to prosperity and power is dependent on resumption of the ancient customs. When this change is manifest by the conduct of the Indians, the Great Spirit will send a flood of mud to drown the white people, will heal the sick, restore the young to youth, bring back the buffalo to the prairie, and the Indian dead to life. Kvit-tsów receives these revelations in a state of trance. While declaring the invulnerability of himself and his followers, he does not advise war, but, on the contrary, teaches that the promised future will ensue as a reward of faith. The time of fulfilment is now set in May. In September, 1889, two delegates from each of twelve different tribes were sent to hear the prophet and report on his teaching. Some of these delegates from eastern tribes had travelled two or three months to reach Mason's Valley. Some conversed by the sign language; hence, thinks Lieutenant Phister, the doctrine was altered and perverted in transmission to the Arrapahoes, Sioux, Cheyennes, and other tribes.

It is much to be wished that Lieutenant Phister would give the evidence in detail, and that inquiries should be made into the character and career of the earlier prophet. Had the conditions allowed it, the new faith would probably have developed into a permanent religion. So remarkable a phenomenon ought not to be passed over without doing everything possible for its elucidation.

*W. W. N.*